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RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 004448

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KPKO](#) [CD](#) [SU](#) [FR](#)  
SUBJECT: FRANCE/CHAD: LOOKING FOR AFRICAN OPTIONS ON CAMP  
PROTECTION

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah B. Rosenblatt. Reas  
ons 1.4b,d

¶1. (C) Summary: MFA AF A/S-equivalent Bruno Joubert told visiting DASD Theresa Whelan on January 26 that France is exploring the use of 200-250 African gendarmes for refugee protection at 12 camps in eastern Chad. He said French troops would not be able to provide protection but would coordinate in support of the gendarmes. Defense Minister Alliot-Marie has broached the idea with the UN Secretary-General, and Senegal and Benin have expressed

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interest in participating. Joubert said he was very preoccupied by developments on Darfur, particularly the prospects and timeline for UN deployment. Joubert reiterated the French view that troubles in Chad are a spillover from developments in Darfur, with the Government of Sudan (GOS) continuing to exploit Deby's domestic difficulties. Deby's position is profoundly weakened but he remains the only viable option for rule in Chad in the French view. End Summary.

¶2. (C) DASD Whelan called on MFA AF A/S-equivalent Bruno Joubert on June 26 while visiting for Joint Staff talks on Africa with the MOD. DOD Regional Programs Director Terrence Wong; Director Clarence Smith, Africa Center for Strategic Studies; Susan McCarty, AF/RSA; LtCol Robert Gibson, Centcom; LTC Jay Connors, EUCOM; LTC Mike Vassalotti, U.S. liaison officer to the French Joint Staff; DAO LTC Jeff Kulmayer and Africa Watcher Greg D'Elia also participated. DAS-equivalent Helene Le Gal was present on the French side.

African Gendarmes and Refugee Camps in Chad  
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¶3. (C) Joubert told DASD Whelan that France is notionally exploring the use of 200-250 African gendarmes for refugee protection at 12 camps in eastern Chad. The gendarmes would operate in association with the African Union (AU), possibly with an explicit AU mandate, Joubert said, adding that there would be a cooperative relationship with French troops in-country. The threefold purpose would be to prevent the camps from being used to store weapons, to help deter Janjaweed depredations, and, Joubert allowed, to help defend France against charges of inaction. Joubert said French troops would not be able to provide protection but would coordinate to support the gendarmes. (Note: Col. Brousse of

French Joint Operations Staff remarked that French troops in Chad are not configured to protect the camps and it would require an additional 1-2 battalions to secure all twelve camps.)

14. (C) Joubert commented that Defense Minister Alliot-Marie had recently broached the idea with the UN Secretary-General.

Joubert stated that France had approached Senegal and Benin about participation and that the preliminary response had been positive. AF DAS-equivalent Helen Le Gal remarked that Chadian gendarmes, who had been responsible for camp protection under a UNHCR agreement, had now been redeployed to reinforce the Chad-Sudan border. She said OCHA Coordinator Egeland and a number of NGOs had appealed to France to help protect refugees. Joubert did not answer DASD Whelan's question about how France envisioned funding the African gendarmes.

Deby Deeply Wounded; Resistant to Dialogue

15. (C) Joubert reiterated the French view that troubles in Chad are a spillover from developments in Darfur, with the Government of Sudan (GOS) continuing to exploit Deby's domestic difficulties. The GOS originally sought to work with Deby in addressing the Darfur crisis during the March/April 2004 N'djamena negotiations, but then decided to undermine Deby and foster a Zaghawa revolt, as Khartoum came to realize that Deby's own Zaghawa brethren (and not Abdulwahid Al-Nur and the Fur ethnic group) constituted Sudan's primary military opponent in Darfur. Physically ill and politically weakened after the April 2006 FUC offensive, Deby was highly vulnerable and unable to retain the allegiance of younger Zaghawa, who now believed they could only maintain their predominance by toppling Deby. In

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addition to the Erdimi brothers, Deby's own half-brother Daoud (whose mother is also a distant cousin of JEM leader Khalil Ibrahim) was a definite threat.

16. (C) Minister-Delegate for Cooperation Girardin and French Presidential Adviser Bonnetcorse, when visiting Chad two weeks ago, had pressured Deby to launch real dialogue with opposition leaders, but Deby had not been receptive. The opposition moreover remained divided and also showed little inclination to engage in dialogue, perhaps preferring simply to outlast a declining Deby. Despite this gloomy assessment, Joubert repeated what has become a standard GOF refrain: France nonetheless continues to see no alternative to Deby.

Watching the Border

17. (C) Asked by DASD Whelan to describe the extent of French situational awareness along the Chad-Sudan border, Joubert replied that France, with only 60 personnel covering a 1200-kilometer stretch of the border, was capable of tracking with reasonable confidence only larger movements and developments. Smaller cross-border incursions, particularly those by gangs on horseback, went unnoticed. While it was possible to construct a general picture of overall strategies based on conversations among rebel Darfur leaders, the tactical and local level remained a blind spot, "totally out of reach" according to Joubert, since militia in the field in Darfur operated with near-absolute autonomy from rebel leadership.

Downcast on Darfur

18. (C) Joubert said he was very troubled by developments concerning Darfur, particularly the prospects for deploying a UN mission. He understood from U/SYG Guehenno that the UN was very worried about current plans for the mission and was now thinking in terms of a much larger and more mobile

deployment. Slippage on the deployment calendar, moreover, risked huge financial consequences; EU funds were tapped out, Joubert and Le Gal emphasized. Sudanese President Bashir had hardened his line against the deployment and the AU had only limited leverage, such as the ability to impede Bashir's possible election as AU Chairman to succeed Congo/Brazzaville's Sassou-N'guessou.

¶9. (C) Joubert said he was personally puzzled about how to bargain with the GOS. It was very difficult to ascertain what the GOS wanted. He described FM Lam Akol, who visited Paris in mid-June, as a "disaster" on Darfur. The Government of National Unity, in effect, seemed a contrivance, with the former Khartoum clique continuing to call the shots. Joubert wondered why the GOS was rejecting the UN in Darfur in such extreme terms. DASD Whelan noted that the GOS was apprehensive about the UN making arrests pursuant to the ICC investigations authorized in 2005 UNSCR 1593. Joubert admitted that the ICC resolution had been the cause of a major flare-up between the GOS and France, but he discounted the impact of the ICC investigation as "one little element" in explaining the GOS posture on Darfur.

¶10. (C) Asked by DASD Whelan on how to counter the Chinese tendency to defend GOS interests at the Security Council with respect to a UN mission for Darfur, Joubert suggested that mobilizing the AU was vital, whether at the Banjul Summit or thereafter. Beijing dreads isolation and, with growing interests in Africa, would not want to oppose an AU decision, Joubert believed.

¶11. (U) DASD Whelan cleared this cable.

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